FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY

Career Services and Employer Relations

An Introduction to Professionalism

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Keys to becoming a Professional

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How to Present Yourself

Look the part. Or, as the saying goes, "fake it 'til you make it." If you look like a confident, capable person, eventually you'll start to feel it, too. You should dress how you feel best.

Women: Wear a clean suit or dress that fits properly. It should be classic or conservative in style and color. Less is more when it comes to jewelry and accessories. Wear polished dark shoes. Remember to put on deodorant or antiperspirant. Wear minimal to no perfume. Avoid trends and underwear lines. You should have a neat, tidy, and comfortable hairdo. Be sure to have clean breath, teeth, and finger nails.

Men: Wear a solid navy, black, or dark gray suit that is tailored to you. You should have a clean, ironed shirt with a neatly tied tie without stains and polished dark shoes. Remember to put on deodorant or antiperspirant. Wear minimal to no cologne. You should be well-groomed with clean breath, teeth, and finger nails.

Perfect your posture. How you carry yourself communicates a lot to other people, so make sure you're telling them that you're confident and in-charge. Keep your shoulders back, your spine straight, and your chin high. Walk with purpose instead of dragging your feet, and sit up straight. When you look like a confident person on the outside, you'll be approached as one by the world around you.

Smile. You'd be surprised how even the smallest of smiles can disarm many a social situation and make everyone feel more comfortable.

Make eye contact. Don't be afraid to meet the gaze of someone else; it shows not only that you are a person worthy of communicating with, but it tells them you respect them, acknowledge their presence, and are interested in the conversation.

Turn your negative thoughts to positive thoughts. As you pay attention to your negative thoughts, turn them around to positive thoughts. This may take the form of positive affirmations, such as "I am going to try it," "I can be successful if I work at it," or "people will listen to me." Start with just a few positive thoughts a day.

Create a support network. A negative environment is a confidence killer. Surround yourself with people who support your efforts. This way, you'll be free to practice confident skills without being judged by those around you. Let your support network know that you're trying to gain confidence.

Chapter

2

Customize Your Resume

Your resume is an introduction to a potential employer. More often than not, employers will initially scan your resume and make an assessment quickly, often in 6 to 30 seconds. Your resume should create an interest in meeting you to learn more about your skills and experiences. The goal of your resume is to get an interview. Keep in mind that the resume you used for your college applications is different than a professional resume. Your resume gets you an interview, and your performance during the interview gets you the job.

A professional resume is a marketing tool that distinguishes you from the competition by highlighting your major accomplishments and related experiences. It is a way to emphasize your contributions and impact to previous organizations and shows how you match the current employer's needs.

Your resume should be organized, neat and easy to read. Before you begin writing, perform a comprehensive self-inventory. Make a list of experiences, activities, and volunteer work. Note the skills and accomplishments you want to highlight for each. Write as many details as possible about all your experiences (Do not worry about length initially).

Develop and write accomplishment statements. Effective bullet accomplishment statements demonstrate your key skills, talents and capabilities with measurable, concrete examples. These statements give specific examples of tasks you completed and the contribution or benefit of your efforts to an organization.

List Your Soft Skills. Soft skills are personal attributes that help people work well together. Employers consistently cite communication and teamwork as some of the most important soft skills. (More on this in Chapters 5-22)

Be aware that recruiters will likely read the first one or two accomplishments under each job. Even though all are important, order the bullets to reflect the skills that the employer finds most pertinent.

About Cover Letters

The purpose of a **_cover letter_** is to show how you can help the company or organization (NOT what you hope to learn from the experience). It is used to show how you match with the skills required for the position. It serves as a writing sample so it should be free from spelling and grammatical mistakes. Address the cover letter to a specific person (hiring manager or human resources contact). You should make EVERY effort to determine a real person to whom you address your cover letter.

Employers use social media to screen and select candidates.
Websites like **_LinkedIn_** are a useful tool in the job application process.

Interviews

Employers expect applicants to be ready for the ***interview***. There are three main areas to prepare: Why you? Why them? Why now?

FIGURE 21.1 In a survey of 2000 bosses, 33% claimed that they know within the first 90 seconds of an interview whether they will hire someone.

Why you? Know your skills, talents, interests, and how those can help the organization. Be prepared with a mental list of what skills you have to offer. Know accomplishments you have made and goals you want to achieve. What are you good at: Organizing, public speaking, working with your hands? Who are you: Outgoing, reserved, sensitive, objective, analytical?

Why them? Research the organization and the opportunity. What do you like? (Technology, politics, children, art or music) What other factors, other than the job itself, motivates you? (Travel, Indoor/outdoor work environment, large salary, short commute, good benefits, etc.) Study up on the company and employer on LinkedIn. Exemplify your knowledge to _show interest_. Why are you passionate about the job? What will you bring to the job? What are you hoping to get out of the job?

Why now? Show your fit with the organization. You should also show why this specific position fits with your career path. Help the employer connect why this position is of interest to your long-range plans and career. What skills do you want to use?

The Basics:
Be on time. Dress professionally. Be polite. Have a firm handshake. Smile. Have good posture. Be Confident!

Ending the interview
Get the employer's card or contact information, find out what the follow-up will entail, send a follow-up e-mail within 24 hours, and solidify your interest in the job – ***show excitement!***

How to Expand Your Network

Networking is simple; it's all about socializing! Getting your name out there and making connections is one of the best ways to increase your chances of being hired. Networking is an alternative way of finding out about job opportunities, internships, or even just getting advice about a certain career field.

80% of jobs are found through networking. Start by talking to the people you already know- friends, family, former employers, mentors, and community leaders. Everyone knows someone, and that someone just might be a professional in your field.

Another way to network is to attend events where professionals will be gathered. Use this as an opportunity for more formal networking. Getting employers familiar with your name and face will help tremendously when they sit at their desk with a stack of otherwise anonymous resumes. Make sure to dress appropriately at these events and remember, networking is an interaction- be sure listen to the person you're talking to and not just give them your pitch.

Networking does not require you to know dozens of influential or powerful people –it is simply the process of contacting people who can help you in planning your career or looking for internships. Anyone from your everyday life –friends, family, or even your hair stylist and mechanic –can directly or indirectly guide you to the right people. Talk with everyone about what you are doing and the type of position you are interested in. You can also bring up your search casually during conversations with family, friends, and other connections. This will allow others to know about your search and possibly assist you.

What to bring to a networking event:
Your elevator pitch, a business card, professional attire, a good handshake and a smile!

So... what's an elevator pitch?
An **_elevator pitch_** is meant to be a brief statement about why you should be hired. Your pitch should set you apart from the crowd and cover the crucial points from your résumé, cover letter, and interview. Include the following: Who are you and what do you offer? Why are you interested in the position? What are your credentials? What can you do for the employer?

Practice your pitch and get comfortable with it. A successful elevator pitch is the ideal chance to promote yourself and boldly answer those two interview questions, "Tell me about yourself" and "Why should I hire you?" in as few words as possible. Keep your message **_focused, clear, and unforgettable._** Remember, **_you_** are the brand.

Chapter

5

Communication

Communication is the process of transferring messages between a sender and a receiver through various methods (written, nonverbal, or spoken). It is the mechanism we use to establish and modify relationships.

Be confident. Know that you are making a worthwhile contribution to the conversation. Take time each day to be aware of your opinions and feelings so you can adequately convey them to others.

Make eye contact. Whether you are speaking or listening, look into the eyes of the person with whom you are conversing to make the interaction more successful. Eye contact conveys interest and encourages your partner to be interested in you in return. Don't send mixed messages. Make your words, gestures, facial expressions and tone match.

Be aware of what your body is saying. Body language can say so much more than words. An open stance with arms relaxed at your sides tells anyone around you that you are approachable and open to hearing what they have to say.

Establish constructive attitudes and beliefs. Your attitude towards communication will have a huge impact on the way you compose yourself and interact with others. Be honest, patient, optimistic, sincere, respectful, and accepting of others. Be sensitive to people's feelings, and believe in others' competence.

LISTEN. Not only should you be able to speak well, you must also actively listen to other people's words. Avoid the impulse to blurt out your ideas or memories in your mind while the other person is speaking.

Enunciate your words. Speak clearly and don't mumble. If people are always asking you to repeat yourself, try to articulate yourself in a better manner. Pronounce your words correctly. People will judge your competency through your vocabulary. If you aren't sure of how to say a word, don't use it. Improve your vocabulary by reading new words daily.

Slow your speech down. You will be perceived as nervous and unsure of yourself if you talk too fast. However, be careful not to slow down to the point where people begin to finish your sentences.

Develop your voice. A high or whiny voice is not one of authority. A high and soft voice can make you sound like prey to an aggressive co-worker or make others not take you seriously. Avoid a monotone and use dynamics. You should be animating your voice so that your pitch is fluctuating periodically.

Use appropriate volume. Use a volume that is appropriate for the setting. Speak more softly when you are alone and close. Speak louder when you are speaking to larger groups or across bigger spaces.

Teamwork

Teamwork is a critical skill that you as a person will need to learn. Teamwork is a highly regarded ability- especially employers. If a person has good team working qualities, it helps build relationships with others. Some of these tips not only apply when working on a team, but are also used when communicating with people on a day-to-day basis.

Share your ideas. While listening to other people's thoughts and ideas is essential, if no one is willing to share their ideas with each other, the team won't get very far. You have to be willing to share an idea. Don't leave it to everybody else. It will not only give you more confidence within the team but can also help to encourage others to put forward ideas of their own. Don't hold back because you want the credit for yourself and you don't want others to steal the limelight, it's not the end of the world. Just be more laid back about it and care more about helping the team out, not just yourself.

Don't be biased. When working with others, it's not uncommon for people to not get along with each other. Maybe something outside of the team has happened between these people, maybe you just don't get along, however, don't let this put a downer on your team. When you let sore relationships get in the way of making the correct decisions, or you refuse to help the team because of this, you're only hurting the team as a whole. Not only that, but people will lose respect for you if you can't be mature enough to put it behind you.

Be willing to accept. A good team member will be able to have all of the other qualities on this list, as well as having the willingness to accept team decisions and roads of development. It can be very easy to not run with an idea that was chosen over yours, but having the ability to do so will allow the group to make better progress. Believe it or not, it's also good for keeping team morale up, as things run a lot smoother when all team members are willing to accept and participate in an idea 100%.

Be Supportive. A good team that works together shouldn't just be a group of individuals working together, but should in a sense form an individual as a whole, made from all of the individual team members. Different individuals of the team will have different personalities and characteristics, meaning different levels of encouragement and support will be needed. Being able to recognize when somebody needs encouragement or support is a skill that is developed over time, but is great for team morale. It also allows you to become closer to that person or people, showing that you care what is happening to them, further tightening the team together.

Chapter

7

Problem Solving

Analytical thinking and problem-solving skills are part of many jobs. While the skills needed to solve individual problems may vary, there are approaches that can help you improve your problem-solving skills in general.

Alert people affected by the problem. Give them a stake in resolving it. As you work through possible solutions, keep these people informed of your progress. Let them know what to expect and when to expect it. Be as optimistic as you can, but also realistic.

Define the problem clearly. Avoid making snap judgments based on a few symptoms but look for root causes whenever possible. Poor performance may not be caused by an individual's lack of skills but by ineffective communication of expectations and insufficient training on how to meet those expectations.

Choose a problem-solving strategy. Brainstorming is the generation of ideas as they occur to you, alone or in a group. List the solutions to evaluate their suitability. Appreciative inquiry analyzes what's currently going right and whether it can be applied to solve the problem at hand. Design thinking means observing how people interact with a product or service and noting problems. In some cases, a combination of strategies may be the best approach to finding a solution.

Gather information. Coupled with clearly defining a problem is gathering information. This may mean consulting with people closer to certain aspects of the problem to get a proper grasp of its scope, or researching similar situations elsewhere to see what the root causes of those problems were and how they were resolved.

Analyze the information. The information needs to be analyzed for its relevance and its importance. The most critical or key information should be drawn upon, while the remaining information may need to be ranked for its importance and relevance.

Evaluate the solutions. Just as it was necessary to analyze the information found for its relevance, prospective solutions must be analyzed for their suitability to determine which is best to handle the problem.

Implement your solution. Once the best solution is determined, put it into practice. This may be done on a limited scale at first to verify that the solution is indeed the best, or it may be implemented system-wide if the need for it is critical.

Get feedback. While this step should be implemented while testing prospective solutions, it is also helpful to continue getting feedback along the way. This will allow for adjustments as needed.

Chapter

8

Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is very important in today's world. Ordinary, usual and normal are expected. Thinking outside the box is essential to formulating new ideas.

Write it down. In a way, it's good to have a lot of sticky notes. First of all, you won't forget to do something, second you'll remember what to do next. Third, it can lead to creative thinking.

Plan your work. Before you start your work, think of the process of how you can give it your best.

Enjoy your work. Without enjoying what you're doing, the creative process will not flow. Do not say "I don't like this, or this is so boring." Stay positive and think "This is great work, I love what I'm doing."

Never lose hope in yourself. If you lose your hope in yourself, you won't be able to stay motivated. Believe in yourself and keep reminding yourself "I'm creative, or I can do this!"

Volunteer yourself. It really gives you great confidence.

Think about everything from a different side. You will learn something.

Write and read articles. It will help you improve your vocabulary.

Say yes more than no. Opportunities help you gain knowledge. Life only comes once, so learn as much as you can. You may start thinking creatively if you participate in everything.

Chapter

9

Learning

In order to start learning effectively, it's imperative that you know how you learn. There are three types of learning styles and most people fall clearly into one category. Even if you are about evenly split between two, it's advantageous to know what doesn't work as well: 1. **Visual** learners learn primarily by seeing and looking. They tend to sit in front of the class, are neat and clean, and often close their eyes to remember or visualize something. They benefit from illustrations, color, and like to see what they are learning 2. **Aural** learners prefer to learn by hearing and listening. They often sit where they can hear, but not necessarily where they can see. They hum or talk to themselves when bored, find themselves reading aloud and remembering by verbalizing lessons or information. They'd rather talk than write and relish the opportunity to discuss what they've learned 3. **Kinesthetic** learners learn best by touching and doing. They need to be active, take frequent breaks, and are often caught using their hands and gesturing while talking. They enjoy activities that manipulate materials, like cooking, construction, and engineering and will tinker or move around when bored.

Understand the differences. Each learner needs different things to adequately conceptualize and retain the information they are given. If a visual learner is told to remember something, they won't. If a kinesthetic learner watches a movie on how to do something, they might not be able to retain the information. Neither is less intelligent than the other--they just aren't tuned into their optimal learning style. Learning abilities don't stop in the classroom. Styles invade the way we talk! Look for key examples found in dialogue: A visual learner might say, "This looks good." His or her aural counterpart would say, "This sounds good." "I hear you," versus "I see what you're saying." If you are conflicted as to what your style is, tune into your words--or ask others to keep an ear (an eye?) out for you!

Visual learners should use written materials and exercises; use boards, models, and flip charts; and take good notes.

Aural learners should tape record lectures, ask questions, and participate in small groups.

Kinesthetic learners should demonstrate a concept, underline and highlight, and get involved physically.

Be patient. Changing how you learn doesn't come overnight. Certain topics are going to come easier to you than others. Keeping an open mind will make it easier to persevere in the face of difficulty. Don't be ashamed to ask for help. If you know someone who's an expert on a topic you're studying, hit them up! They'd love to bestow their knowledge on someone else. Whether friends, family, or mentors, tap into the resources you have around you. Learning doesn't have to stop at 3 pm on Friday. If you find something that ignites a fire in you, keep with it! With technology nowadays, you don't even have to pay for it.

Chapter

10

Time Management

These days, time seems to be at a premium. We have devices that keep us constantly connected with work, friends and family, and sometimes even complete strangers. As a result, it's easy to get distracted. If you're like most of us, you have a lot to accomplish.

Make a list of the tasks you need to accomplish. But before you can manage your time, you need to know what it is you must manage. A list of tasks, from the mundane to the critical, will help you get a handle on what needs to get done. Assign realistic priorities to each task.

Determine your productivity times. Some of us are morning people, and some of us cringe at the idea of getting up early. You might already have a sense of what times of day you're most productive. Whether you prefer evenings, mornings, lunchtime, or right before or after workday rush hours, take advantage of those times to maximize your productivity.

Manage time in increments. Play a game with yourself by competing against the clock. Work in fifteen minute, half-hour or hour intervals. Scientifically, it is known that 45 minutes work followed by a 10 minutes rest is the best for the average student. Give yourself a time goal to complete a portion of a task or the entire task.

Take a break. Clear your mind and refresh yourself to refocus. Decide beforehand on a 5, 10 or 15 minute break and stick to that decision. Breaks provide incentive by giving you something to look forward to having.

Keep track of your progress. Cross things off the list as they are completed. You'll feel more relieved and relaxed just by getting through the daily tasks. Not only will you be getting things done, finishing tasks will give you a sense of accomplishment and spur motivation.

Reassess the list. Rewrite and prioritize your list on a regular basis. Add new tasks to the list. Eliminate or adjust tasks that are completed, or fall in priority. Use technology to complete tasks more quickly, efficiently or accurately. Today's mobile technology features dozens, if not hundreds of apps that will help you manage—and even accomplish—your tasks efficiently.

Leave time for fun. While there are times when we just need to power through a large project, it's important to give yourself time to let loose. Not only will it refresh your mind, it's good for your body, too. It doesn't have to be a lot of time but make sure that you do!

Sleep for 7-8 hours every night. Getting the proper amount of sleep will help keep you alert and energetic, able to think clearly, and function at a high level.

Chapter

11

Organization

It is important to have great organizational skills in order to be productive and not overwhelmed by information overload.

Schedule your activities and appointments. Scheduling the most important tasks as well as appointments can be helpful. You might also "batch" your days by having meetings only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for example. Keep some holes in your schedule as well for creative time to yourself or to accommodate the unexpected. Use an organizer and calendar, Categorize your activities, Streamline your technology, and Delegate wherever possible.

Manage clutter and work materials. Our desks easily go from cluttered to tornado sites, obviously hampering organization. Some people even operate on a clean-desk-only policy. While that's not absolutely necessary, take steps to clear your workspace. De-clutter! Toss your junk in the garbage and file your needed materials systematically. Clear clutter whenever possible: during lulls in the workday, breaks, or in between tasks. Clean up after yourself immediately. That way it's on the top of your mind. Plus, you avoid the inevitable agitation of having current clutter become part of your future clutter. Keep necessary supplies handy. Not everything around you is clutter, of course. Having needed tools available saves you time and makes good use of your precious space.

Don't compare yourself to co-workers. Most of our coworkers' jobs are different from our own, and everyone has different methods of organization that work for them. A method that makes sense and is efficient to a colleague might not be the best method for you and vice versa.

Monitor your activities. Spend a couple days keeping a journal or log of your daily activities. This will help you see exactly what you do that you might not even realize, and it will provide an initial glimpse into organizational and productivity gaps. This exercise should also be done with your big-picture goals in mind. Through the activity log, you can see what activities might be time-wasters and which activities might actually further your goals.

Accept that organization is an ongoing process. Don't expect to be perfect. Organization is ongoing and requires ongoing attention. You won't be optimally organized every day, but a little organization goes a long way to boosting your efficiency.

Balance your effort. Work on small portions every day of work that will be due by the end of the week, starting with the most important tasks first. Concentrate on what is at hand, and do not allow yourself to lose focus. Once tasks are completed, mark them as such, and proceed to the next task.

Decision Making

We make decisions every day; everything we say and do is the result of a decision, whether we make it consciously or not. For every choice, big or small, there's no easy formula for making the right decision. The best you can do is to approach it from as many perspectives as possible and then choose a course of action that seems reasonable and balanced at that time.

Write about your fears. Journaling about your fears may help you to start to understand them and make a better decision as a result. Start by writing about the decision you need to make. Describe or list everything that you are worried about regarding this decision. Allow yourself to vent about these fears without judging yourself for having them.

Identify the worst case scenario. Try to identify the worst case scenario for each possible choice. Pushing your decision to the limits of what could go wrong if all goes wrong may make the process less frightening. Decide whether this worst-case scenario is actually likely to happen. Examine the worst scenario you've proposed, and then consider what would have to happen to get you there.

Consider whether the decision you make will be permanent. Once you have thought about everything that could go wrong, think about whether the decision is reversible. Most decisions are reversible, so you can take comfort in knowing that if you hate your decision, you can always make a change to fix the situation later on.

Gather information, talk to a friend or family member. Don't feel like you have to make a tough decision all by yourself. Share the details about the decision as well as your fears about what could go wrong.

Stay calm. Riding high on emotions, either positive or negative, can impact your ability to make a rational decision. When you have any decision to make, the first step should generally be to stay as calm as possible. If you can't stay calm, put off making the decision until you're thinking clearly

Trust your instincts. You probably have a sense of which decision is the right one, so if all else fails you should go with your gut. Research has shown that people who make decisions based on how they feel tend to be more satisfied with their decisions than people who carefully weigh them out.

Make a choice. No matter which decision you make, be prepared to accept responsibility for every outcome. If things don't work out, it's always better to have made a conscious decision than to have been careless. At least you can say that you did the best you could. Make your decision and be ready to stand by it.

Chapter

13

Leadership

Leadership can sometimes be a rather unknown thing to managers. It's certainly integral to good management but is quite complicated to know what leadership is. Often it can be separated from management as while you can have good managers who are bad leaders and bad managers who are great leaders the goal is to be balanced in both areas. But leadership is not just limited to business, government and other service based societies or organizations. Ultimately it's about being a leader to ourselves so that we can lead others. Leadership must start at the basic level to be universal.

Consider how leadership plays a role in your project and what you may need to address. A leader should inspire and motivate and ensure the team works, but if the leader has no strengths in keeping to a deadline, or being able to follow through and act on problems, then leadership quality fails on the inability to act and resolve issues. On top of this, being unable to delegate and follow up on the issue loses respect of your team members. Leadership and management in a reductionist sense ultimately is about one thing: satisfactory completion of a task. Leadership can be used to make the task completed quicker, but that limits the quality of the experience as few people can learn anything from it. A quality leader makes both the task and the experience better.

Analyze your own strengths and weaknesses in order to explore what leadership is. In business this is often done in a SWOT analysis, known as Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. It can also be done with good success for personal leadership. Write down what you feel are your SWOT is and then allow another person of integrity to do the same of their opinions of you. This allows you to see problems you may not be aware of. The benefit is that being able to understand others on a subtle level can only come from being able to know ourselves. Once we can successfully identify the nature and habits of our own mind can we see the motivations of others, as well as how we can effectively lead.

Consider what your own ethics are. A leader who is without ethics - treating everything as a means to an end can sometimes be the strongest, but at the same time, the weakest leader. The person who rules with an iron fist based on personal feelings and opinions, or does not consider the price and outcome of their actions is simply dictatorial. These people do not have the greater strength to transcend the personal for the greater good.

Be Natural and be Humane in practice and analysis. As obvious as this one sounds, it is surprisingly that people are often trying to scrape up motivation and inspiration inside to be able to inspire and motivate others. Natural leadership comes from an expanded sense of cause and effect, or, action and outcome. The most important goal is to measure against your own experiences. By bringing in your own empathy, insights and understanding, as opposed to relying solely on other people's ideas, will help you far more in the context. Humanity inspires and consoles, but it is human nature as well as human ability that is the central focus to stay in touch with reality.

Chapter

14

Persuasion

Convincing people that your way is the best way is often very difficult -- especially when you're not quite sure why they're saying no. Turn the tables on your conversation and convince people of your point of view. The trick is to get them wondering why they're saying no -- and with the right tactics, you can do it.

Understand how timing is everything. Knowing how to persuade people isn't just in words and body language -- it's also in knowing the right time to talk to them. If you approach people when they are more relaxed and open to discussion, you will most likely achieve faster, better results.

Get to know them. A large part of whether or not persuasion is effective is based on the general rapport between you and your client/friend/employee. If you don't know the person well, it's imperative to start building this rapport immediately -- find common ground as soon as possible. Humans, in general, feel safer around (and thus are more fond of) people that are similar to them.

Speak in the affirmative. "Don't hesitate to contact me," is not the same as, "Call me on Thursday!" Whoever you're talking to won't know what you mean and therefore won't be able to give you what you want.

Lean on ethos, pathos, and logos. *Ethos* -- think credibility. We tend to believe people whom we respect. *Pathos* -- relies on your emotions. *Logos* -- that's the root of the word "logic." This is perhaps the most honest of the persuasion methods. You simply state why the person you're talking to should agree with you. That's why statistics are used so prevalently.

Generate a need. This is rule #1 when it comes to persuasion. After all, if there's no need for what you're trying to sell/get/do, it won't happen. All you have to do is look at Maslow's Hierarchy. Think about different realms of need -- whether it's physiological, safety and security, love and belongingness, self-esteem or self-actualization needs, you can certainly find an area that is missing something, something only you can improve.

Master the body language. If you seem unapproachable, closed off, and unwilling to compromise, people won't want to listen to a word you have to say. Even if you're saying all the right things, they're picking up the words from your body. Watch your positioning just as much as you watch your mouth.

Chapter

15

Negotiation

Whether it's buying a house, disputing your cell phone bill, scoring more frequent flier miles, haggling in China, or paying off your credit card, the basic principles of negotiation are the same. Just remember that even the most skilled and experienced negotiators will feel discomfort when negotiating. The only difference is a skilled negotiator has learned to recognize, and suppress the outward signs of these feelings.

Decide on your break-even point. In financial terms, this is the lowest amount or cheapest price you will accept in the deal. In non-financial terms, this is the "worst-case scenario" you are willing to accept before walking away from the negotiating table. Not knowing your break-even point can leave you accepting a deal that is not in your best interest.

Know what you're worth. Is what you're offering hard to come by, or is it a dime a dozen? If what you have is rare or noteworthy, you have the better bargaining position. How much does the other party need you? If they need you more than you need them, you have the better position, and can afford to ask for more. If, however, you need them more than they need you, how can you give yourself an edge?

Never feel rushed. Don't underestimate your ability to negotiate for what you want by simply outlasting someone else. If you have patience, use it. If you lack patience, gain it. What often happens in negotiations is that people get tired and accept a position that they wouldn't ordinarily accept because they're tired of negotiating. If you can outlast someone by staying at the table longer, chances are you'll get more of what you want.

Plan how you will structure your proposals. Your proposals are what you offer to the other person. A negotiation is a series of exchanges, where one person offers a proposal and the other person counter-proposes. The structure of your proposals can spell success or lead to disaster.

Shop around, and bring proof. If you're negotiating a salary and you've researched how much people in equivalent positions get paid in your area, print out those statistics and have them handy. The threat of losing business or opportunity, even if it's not a serious one, can make people compromise.

Be ready to walk away. You know what your break-even point is, and you know if that's not what you're getting. Be willing to walk out the door if that's the case. You might find that the other party will call you back, but you should feel happy with your efforts if they don't.

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